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Remarks by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus
“American Seapower Today”
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Ernie Chambers, thank you so much for that introduction, a Navy civilian at the Eisenhower School. Thank you all for allowing me to speak today. Before coming here, earlier today I attended the 9-11 Remembrance at the Pentagon. While it is important in so many ways to look back and to remember, it's also critical to look forward to how we deal with the complicated and often dangerous world that we have today.

Institutions like this, like National Defense University help prepare us to meet these challenges by forcing us to think anew about what lies ahead for our military forces and for the future of military force itself.

I have had a unique and very privileged view of the Navy and the Marine Corps for the past four years. And I want to share with you my perspective about what American seapower means, and about how our current fiscal path will define how we will, or will not, be able respond to the nation's call in the future.

The value of the Navy and Marine Corps team is as apparent today as it was at the founding of our nation. Enshrined in our Constitution is the direction to Congress to “provide and maintain a Navy.” There's a reason for including “maintain.” At that time, the Navy was a tangible and permanent signal of our independence and of our presence on the world's stage. Throughout our history, the Navy and Marine Corps team has been called on to act in both war and in peace, and

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today continues to play a large and vital role on that stage. The framers of the Constitution understood that the Navy had to provide constant and persistent presence—it had to be “maintained.” Presence is what the Navy and Marine Corps are all about.

Two hundred years ago yesterday Oliver Hazard Perry scrawled out a quick report of his desperate fight against the British on Lake Erie, “We have met the enemy, and they are ours.” From those early victories in the defense of the Republic to the heroic fights in places like Mobile Bay and Manila; Midway and Guadalcanal; to Chosin and the blockade in the Cuban Missile Crisis and the coastal patrols of Vietnam; to the mountains of Afghanistan and the submarines and surface ships shooting cruise missiles into Libya to enforce a no-fly zone; we have been there when the nation called. We have given our commanders-in-chief options no other military force can provide.

But the options we provide span more than just the horizons of war. Today we are, as we should be, focused on bringing our troops home from war, about realigning our military after more than a decade of combat. But Sailors and Marines don’t really have permanent homecomings. In peace we will still deploy, day after day, year after year, just as we have for 238 years. Since the end of World War II we have guaranteed the freedom of navigation and peaceful free trade which has underwritten unprecedented economic growth in the global economy. As the President said last night “for nearly seven decades the United States has been the anchor of global security.”

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We respond to every crisis when the nation calls, whether it's in combat or in response to a natural disaster as in the tsunami in Japan or the earthquake in Haiti or even here at home as in the case of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.

Before the bell rings and long after the guns go silent, presence means we are where it counts not just at the right time, but all the time.

Our ability to respond isn't determined by anyone else; not by over-flight rights, not by permission to base, not by how quickly we can mobilize or move our forces half a world away. Our ships are sovereign U.S. territory. We don't take up an inch of anyone else's soil. That naval presence is what gives the President flexibility to respond no matter what the crisis is.

Two weeks ago, when new and horrifying images from Syria flashed across our televisions and streamed across our iPads, the Navy and Marine Corps was already there, in the Mediterranean and the waters of the Middle East. We didn't have to surge forces. We didn't have to surge equipment. We didn't have to escalate the situation. The nation had immediate options because of our immediate presence.

I guarantee you that if we are called upon to strike, we will strike hard and we will strike fast. As the President said last night, it will be targeted and it will degrade the Assad regime's capabilities.

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Presence is what we do. It is who we are. We reassure our partners that we are there, and assure those who may wish our country and allies harm that we're never far away. That is American seapower.

As the Secretary of the Navy it is my responsibility to make sure that we maintain that presence. It is my job to recruit, and train, and equip the Navy and Marine Corps so they can continue to serve, as they always have, as the sword and shield of the Republic.

Four key factors make this global presence possible. They are our priorities as we look ahead into the future. We must focus on people, platforms, power, and partnerships, because they matter.

Now each of these priorities require detailed thought and rigorous analysis like you do here at National Defense University, and over the next several months I'm planning to discuss each one of them in detail as we plot our way ahead. But don't worry, today I am just going to highlight each one of them and why they matter.

PEOPLE -- Alfred Thayer Mahan, the great naval thinker who you study here at National Defense University, once wrote that being ready for naval operations "consists not so much in the building of ships and guns as it does in the possession of trained Sailors." That's even more true today than when it was written more than 100 years ago. All the equipment--- the ships, aircraft, weapons, cyber systems, everything that our Sailors and Marines operate--- are technological marvels, they are the most advanced in the world. But the real marvel, what gives

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the United States the edge, what sets us apart from the world, are the people who wear the uniform, who sail and fly and operate these technological wonders.

In today's complex, high tech world, more than ever: People matter.

PLATFORMS – The number of ships, and submarines, and aircraft in our fleet is what gives us the capacity to provide our global presence. We have the most advanced platforms in the world, but quantity also has a quality all its own. I've said this a lot before, but it is important to understand how our current fleet size got there. Twelve years ago today, on 9/11 2001, our fleet stood at 316 ships. By 2008, after one of the great military build ups in American history, that number had dropped to 278 ships.

In 2008 the Navy put four ships under contract. Since I took office in May of 2009, we have put 60 ships under contract and by 2019 our current plan will return the fleet to 300 ships. Initiatives to spend smarter and more efficiently through things like competition, and multi-year buys, and, frankly, by driving harder bargains on behalf of taxpayer dollars, have created the way to provide our nation and our Navy with the platforms we need to execute our missions.

To maintain our essential presence and all that brings: Platforms matter.

POWER – Energy and Power are central to our naval forces and our ability to provide presence around the world because it is what we need to get our platforms there and keep them there.

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That's why energy is a national security issue. Oil prices have surged to over \$107 a barrel as tensions with Syria rose two weeks ago and they've stayed there. Oil traders call this a "security premium." This same scenario played out in Egypt, and in Libya, and plays out every time some yahoo threatens to close the Straits of Hormuz or some other potential instability arises.

Even if the United States were to produce all the oil and gas we need, it wouldn't insulate us from this global price instability and volatility. This has huge implications for the Department of Defense and for our security. In the past three years, just in the past three years, price spikes added \$5 billion to the budget, over what was budgeted for fuel. That "security premium" on our fuel comes out of operations and training accounts, meaning we have fewer resources to prepare our Sailors and Marines.

In my time as Secretary we have made a lot of progress toward energy security. We have increased efficiency in our ships like USS MAKIN ISLAND, which came back from deployment with nearly half her fuel budget unspent. From the use of biofuels to power a Carrier Strike Group and its Air Wing at RIMPAC last year to Marines using solar power in Afghanistan, to a lot of different technologies being used on our bases, we are addressing this critical challenge. We are saving money and saving lives.

As I wrote in a recent article in Foreign Policy, the Navy has a long, proud history of leading in energy innovation and change. From sail to coal to oil to nuclear, and now to alternative fuels, the Navy has led the way.

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In the 21st century, as in the past: Power matters.

PARTNERSHIPS – As I've said before, for almost seven decades U.S. Naval forces have protected global commons and have maintained the foundation of the world economy. But the reality is while we can do, and have done a lot; we can not, and should not do it all.

Central to our future success is the Navy and Marine Corps' long history of lasting partnerships across the planet. The Navy and Marine Corps are naturally suited to develop these relationships, particularly in the innovative, small footprint ways called for by our Defense Strategic Guidance. Helping our international partners increase their abilities and become interoperable with us, helps us all.

In an interconnected world, where the burden of security has to be shared: Partnerships matter.

So those are our priorities: people, platforms, power, and partnerships. They make our global presence possible, but they are all at risk today because we lack a flexible, strategically-guided approach to spending cuts in defense. The rigid structure of sequestration, and the inflexible continuing resolutions that result from the annual inability of Congress to pass a budget on time don't allow us to set priorities, don't allow us to be strategic, and they force mindless decisions.

The danger that both of these pose is self-inflicted and if Congress fails to act to correct our current course there is the potential to seriously diminish and permanently harm America's indispensable maritime forces endangering not just our country but the world.

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I am deeply concerned about how this flawed budget process will impact our people and the readiness of our force. To do their job in the way we expect them to do it, our Sailors and Marines have to be incredibly well trained. Because of the way these two pernicious budget relatives operate, there are few places we can go to save money. Training and operations are among the few. Already, our ships are going to sea less, our pilots are flying less, our Marines are going to the field less. This is only going to get worse if sequestration lasts or continuing resolutions occur.

Now, so far, we have protected the full training of the next units to deploy, and the ones that follow them. However not long after that, and I'm talking 12 to 18 months, we will have Sailors and Marines deploy without all the training they need. Through no fault of their own, they will be less ready to face whatever comes over the horizon. We are rapidly reaching the point where no amount of hard work or innovation or anything else will allow us to get this training back and maintain the readiness that is required. That's a description of a hollow force.

Sequestration, if it continues for very long, can also cause us to lose a lot of our progress in shipbuilding. As Secretary I have done everything possible to protect shipbuilding. But, if sequestration keeps going, I can't do it forever. It is, and there is really no other way to put this, a dumb way to cut. We could be forced to do stuff like break multi-year contracts. What this will do is it causes the price of the remaining ships to go up and takes out much of the savings. So we get fewer ships for more money and few savings. Tell me that's smart. And it's not just ships, it's everything that comes under multi-years or block buys, like aircraft.

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Sadly, that's not all. New construction is only part of what keeps our Fleet operating at its current size. Under a continuing resolution, which, by the way, Congress has resorted to every single year since 2005, the Navy is not able to put ships into shipyards for maintenance because this is considered a "new start." Sequestration adds to this because there is less money to maintain the ships and aircraft we already have. So the Fleet could get smaller and that smaller Fleet not as maintained and not as ready. We may be forced to eliminate over three dozen shipyard maintenance periods for our surface ships and submarines and at aviation maintenance depots we will park nearly 200 aircraft because we don't have the money to maintain them.

Having said all that, and it's a lot, let me be clear about something: None of this means that we cannot or should not spend less on defense. None of this means we cannot or should not find more savings. Coming out of two long wars, the American people have the absolute right to expect that we will spend less in the Pentagon. But, do we continue the mindless, non-strategic, un-prioritized cuts that's embodied in sequestration and continuing resolutions? It seems to me that a far better way is to reduce spending in a smart and thoughtful way is to protect our capabilities by setting priorities in that spending. A far better way is to look in relentless detail at every expenditure, and put dollars in support of the Defense Strategy.

The Department of the Navy has a responsibility to the American people to continue to execute the Navy and Marine Corps' dual historic missions, to win our nation's wars and to preserve and defend the peace with the unique capability we have of providing presence. As the Constitution directs, we must maintain a ready force. While it is absolutely imperative that Congress act to

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prevent this future from coming to pass, in the meantime, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and I and the civilian and military leadership of the Department of the Navy are doing everything we possibly can to forestall, and where possible, prevent, irrevocable harm to our warfighting capabilities and to our readiness.

Last night the President laid out the reasons we should take action to deter the use of chemical weapons in Syria. But note, no one has questioned our ability to take action. We had that ability on the day of the attack, we had that ability on the day before the attack, and we continue to have that ability because of established, continuous, and constant naval presence in the region. Today naval presence provides the credible threat of action which makes diplomacy possible.

As Secretary Hagel has said, letting the inflexible, across the board cuts of sequestration persist would be a huge strategic miscalculation. As I've pointed out, in order to keep our deploying units at the right readiness we have borrowed against the future. It won't be long until that bill comes due.

If sequestration continues for its statutory ten year duration, until 2022, or even for a relatively small part of that time, our naval presence and thus the ability to deliver flexible, adaptable, immediate options will almost certainly be compromised and diminished. One of the things you've got to learn here is that it is impossible to know what tests await our country over the next decade. The only thing certain is that it will be different from what we believe it will be today. For seapower, the only certainty for our future is that we must have the presence

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worldwide to provide whoever is President with these critical options that can happen right away.

Whatever course of action our nation decides to take in Syria, I do know this: The maritime options are flexible and they are significant and they are swift. And they are sovereign. But unless we act to address the damage of continuing resolutions and sequestration, they are options which may be limited or just not available in the future.

It is my hope, and in fact it is my charge as Secretary of the Navy, to do all that I can to ensure these options are available to our current and to our future Presidents, and to future generations of Americans.

For almost 238 years our Navy and Marine Corps have established a proven record as agile and adaptable forces. Forward deployed, we remain the most responsive option to defend the United States of America.

We have to endeavor, even in these difficult and uncertain times, to keep it so.

From the Navy, Semper Fortis, Forever Courageous.

From the Marines, Semper Fideles, Forever Faithful.

Thank you.